

17 October 1957

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Geographic Research

THROUGH: Assistant Director, Research and Reports *DEA*

SUBJECT: Novaya Zemlya, CIA/RR-G-18 (Draft)

REFERENCES: (a) Memorandum dated 25 September 1957 from Ch/G
(b) Memorandum dated 1 October 1957 from AD/RR

1. Since the two memoranda concerning Novaya Zemlya -- one from you and the other from Mr. Guthe -- are so closely allied in content as to be almost inseparable, I am replying in a single memorandum to you, which I am routing via Mr. Guthe.
2. On first reading, your comments seem thoroughly justified, and I realize that they stem from ambition for the Division. In the case of the report on Novaya Zemlya, I feel that we would not be justified in living up to your ambitions. The USSR Branch in preparing the report, the editors in reviewing it, and I in approving it for publication were well aware that strategic and operational aspects of Novaya Zemlya were soft pedalled -- but for good reason. First, the Geography Division is not the only component of the Agency that is vitally concerned with the Soviet Arctic. In correlating the report with them, their opinions had to be considered. Second, an NIE covering the Soviet Arctic as a whole has been produced, in which various factors contributing to the strategic significance of Novaya Zemlya but outside our field of competence were considered. Consequently, it was felt that no further emphasis could be placed on the strategic importance of Novaya Zemlya without entering the field of speculation to an indefensible degree. Third, the report was written not in reply to a specific request or on the basis of a single recent and spectacular event, it was designed to fill a basic need for information on a little known but potentially strategic part of the Soviet Arctic. In reviewing the report, I realize that some of the information is in the nature of trivia -- but not a great deal -- and could and undoubtedly should be removed. I feel strongly, however, that it is better to provide information on too many subjects than to omit information that might become significant in view of future events.
3. The third point merits further consideration. All self initiated G-reports are based on needs for information as recognized by D/GG analysts, who are in close touch with our consumers. Past experience indicated that the areas covered have been well selected.

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In the Soviet Branch, for example, the report on The Chukotsk Peninsula (which is similar in character to the Novaya Zemlya report) has received high praise. Following its publication, the authors were invited to discuss the area at one of the weekly JIC briefings at the Pentagon.

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4. Novaya Zemlya is a further step in the same program of disseminating information on little known areas. The fact that two nuclear detonations have taken place near the islands since the report was completed is in itself evidence that the area was well selected. Nevertheless Novaya Zemlya has remained practically a terra incognita. The current report is the only comprehensive account of the islands in the English language and, so far as is known, is superior to any single available geographic description in Russian. At the time work was started, we thought it had been made clear that studies were also to be made of the other four groups of Soviet Arctic Islands. Only upon their completion, can the operational aspects of the islands as a whole be soundly evaluated.

5. Because of the vast amount of research involved for each island group, considerable time must necessarily elapse before all needed geographic background can be assembled. Should the information we have acquired on Novaya Zemlya be withheld from the intelligence community until work on all five island groups can be completed? We think not, but we may be wrong. To find out, why not accompany each copy of Novaya Zemlya disseminated with an appropriately worded questionnaire worked out jointly by D/GG, Ch/G, and AD/RR.

6. In summation, the Geography Division has no objection to producing reports of a spectacular nature, provided they are based on sound research. The more, the better! The Division, however, has the obligation of making readily available for the use of the intelligence community the results of what we consider its sound research program. In view of the general lack of geographic information, this may well be the greatest contribution the Division can make. To surrender this function completely in favor of interpretations that might involve factors more specifically the mission of other units seems far too great a sacrifice.

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Chief, Geography Division

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